

Consensus of the California Strategic Growth Council On Federal Transportation Policy Providing Efficient Mobility for the 21st Century

The nation's planning and investment in transportation should be oriented to support national goals of efficient mobility, economic competitiveness, energy security, and a healthy populace. Sustainable economies and healthy communities are those with access to jobs, education, healthcare, adequate and affordable housing, parks and open space, and more. Providing equitable access to these crucial needs in a resource-constrained environment will require new ways of integrating policy, planning, and infrastructure funding.

The State of California is actively putting into place the policies, programs, and institutions that will allow for continued growth and development in a way that simultaneously achieves environmental, equity, economic, and health benefits. The establishment of the Strategic Growth Council (SGC) demonstrates California's commitment to the kind of multi-agency, multi-objective collaborative planning process that is necessary for sustainable growth. California has led groundbreaking work on scenario-based regional planning, which aims at developing efficient land use patterns that result in multiple co-benefits. Scenario-based regional plans are designed to provide for adequate and affordable housing, access to goods and services, transportation, habitat preservation, efficient use of resources, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This integrated planning approach provides consumers, agencies, and the region valuable savings in the form of reduced expenditures for energy, infrastructure, and maintenance.

With the passage of Senate Bill 375 (Steinberg, 2008), California is creating incentives for regions and developers to achieve greenhouse gas reductions through improved regional land use and transportation planning and implementation. California needs support in implementing SB 375 through a federal funding framework that prioritizes investments in land use and transportation projects based on performance metrics that demonstrate promotion of economic vitality, healthy communities, and a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

The federal government is a critical partner in furthering California's sustainability goals. By thinking more strategically about how we plan and fund transportation infrastructure, Congress has the opportunity to increase mobility for goods and people while at the same time improving public health, enhancing environmental performance, and reducing costs to the taxpayer.

The SGC endorses the California Consensus on Federal Transportation Authorization for 2009¹ developed and endorsed by the California Alliance for Leadership in Mobility. The California Consensus provides a foundation for a much-needed and robustly-funded national program, as well as the best technical aspects for management of the nation's transportation system. It is clear that efficient mobility and sustainability require a broader perspective and cooperative planning among all levels of government and stakeholders. A recommended framework for achieving this is provided below.

Recommended Framework

The following elements should be included in any comprehensive federal transportation program to promote sustainability, provide efficient mobility, and ensure proper coordination among federal, state, and local agencies.

¹ http://www.dot.ca.gov/fedliaison/documents/others/Consensus_2009_Principles.pdf

Establishing Regional Plans and Priorities:

- Encourage and incentivize all large Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO's), in coordination with local governments and other regional stakeholders, to establish scenario-based regional land use and transportation planning processes. These scenario-based regional plans should:
 - consider the demographic and economic assumptions established for regional housing needs projections, regional transportation plans (RTP), current local general plans, and any relevant greenhouse gas emission targets established under state and federal law;
 - inform RTP development by identifying strategies and transportation infrastructure projects that best achieves efficient mobility and connectivity while demonstrating achievement of other benefits, including efficient use of resources, greenhouse gas emission reduction, air quality improvement, housing choice, and environmental protection;
 - consider the potential terrestrial, hydrological, coastal, and air quality impacts of climate change and climate change adaptation strategies for existing and planned infrastructure.
- Fully integrate public health benefits into transportation planning and performance measures at the regional, state, and national levels. Involve public health and conservation officials and experts to participate in regional planning and priority setting.

Resources for Planning:

- Provide technical and financial assistance to States, MPOs, Regional Transportation Planning Agencies (RTPAs), and local governments to develop, enhance, and communicate scenario-based modeling and analytical techniques scaled for various applications that promote the advancement of best practices.
- Provide technical and financial assistance to local governments for the development or updates for general and specific plans, zoning codes, and local transportation plans that facilitate the implementation of the scenario-based regional plans.

Enabling Policies and Funding:

- States, MPOs, and local governments should be incentivized through additional federal funding to prioritize projects that help implement scenario-based regional plans and that:
 - promote sustainable development patterns such as mixed-use, compact, and transit oriented development;
 - provide an appropriate range of opportunities for housing and economic development within a region;
 - provide for expanded or enhanced transit, walking, and biking infrastructure including implementation of "complete streets" and other transportation networks that reduce the reliance on single occupancy automobile travel, and
 - protect natural resources, open space and agricultural lands.
- Provide federal incentives to encourage state, local, and regional governments to implement complementary policies that foster efficient mobility. For example - policies that generate needed funds and promote alternative modes that reduce congestion such as cordon pricing, toll roads, and parking strategies.
- Policies and programs should, to the greatest extent possible, create benefits for the most vulnerable groups and communities, including those with low incomes and disabilities. If disproportionate negative impacts are expected then mechanisms to mitigate those impacts should be included.